

**The President.** One of the things I like to talk about is the need for us to be a responsible society; people take responsibility for the decisions they make in life; people take responsibility—people seize opportunity. The thing I like about Jessica's story is she's willing to seize an opportunity. If you notice, she came looking, she worked hard to find a position, and now she's found a company that is doing its responsibility—in other words, helping people realize their dreams. And that's a very important part of corporate America. It's one of the reasons I like Bob, is he understands that, see.

One of the things that this company does is it provides volunteer time and encourages people to help—love your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. One of the things about America is—look, we've just gone through an interesting story, that says to me that things look pretty good for the economy, and we've been through a lot. In other words, it's a fabulous country, because we'll handle every challenge put in front of us, every challenge, because we've got wonderful people.

The strength of this country, though, is not our military, although we'll keep it strong. It's strong. It needs to stay strong and will. It's not a—thank you, sir. And by the way, thanks for supporting the military. And if you've got a loved one over there, you tell them the Commander in Chief is incredibly proud, proud of what they're doing.

**Participant.** They're right out there.

**The President.** Where?

**Participant.** This young man right here.

**The President.** Thank you for your service. I appreciate you, thanks.

**Participant.** He just came home.

**The President.** Yes. That's great. It's not—strength is not our military. It's not our wallet. It's the heart and soul of the American people. That's the strength. And the fact that this company is willing to say, you know, "Follow your heart and go help somebody who hurts," is an important part of keeping this country strong. It really is. The fact that people are willing to hear the universal call to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself is really an important part of this Nation. And it's a vital part of the Nation. So for those of you who are dreaming big

dreams and working for them, like Jessica is, thanks for doing that—like our business owners—I appreciate that. It's important that you dream big dreams and work hard.

For those of you who are helping people realize their dreams, I thank you as well. It's just an incredibly vital part of a bright future for our country. There's nothing America can't achieve—nothing we can't achieve. You know why? Because this country is full of fabulous people. It's my honor to be with a lot of them here today.

Thank you for coming. God bless. Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. at the Lansdowne Home Depot. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., and Lt. Gov. Michael Steele of Maryland; James Montgomery, owner, James S. Montgomery & Sons; Gary Mangum, co-owner, and Alison Anderson, regional manager, Bell Nursery; John Ferraiuolo, store manager, and Jessica Adamson, paint associate, Lansdowne Home Depot; Brandy Foble, store manager, Ellicott City Home Depot; and Robert Nardelli, chairman, president, and chief executive officer, The Home Depot, Inc.

### **Statement Announcing the Appointment of James A. Baker III as the President's Personal Envoy on Iraqi Debt Resolution**

*December 5, 2003*

Iraq is moving toward freedom, stability, and prosperity. In order to support this effort, I am pleased to announce today that in response to a request from the Iraqi Governing Council for assistance, I have appointed James A. Baker III to be my personal envoy on the issue of Iraqi debt. Secretary Baker will report directly to me and will lead an effort to work with the world's Governments at the highest levels with international organizations and with the Iraqis in seeking the restructuring and reduction of Iraq's official debt. The future of the Iraqi people should not be mortgaged to the enormous burden of debt incurred to enrich Saddam Hussein's regime. This debt endangers Iraq's long-term prospects for political health and economic prosperity. The issue of Iraq debt must be resolved in a manner that is fair and

that does not unjustly burden a struggling nation at its moment of hope and promise. James Baker's vast economic, political, and diplomatic experience as a former Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury will help to forge an international consensus for an equitable and effective resolution of this issue.

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### **Digest of Other White House Announcements**

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The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

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#### ***November 29***

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

#### ***November 30***

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

#### ***December 1***

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Detroit, MI, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Bradley Simmons. He then traveled to Dearborn, MI.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Canton, MI. Later, he traveled to Newark, NJ, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Patricia Fields. He then traveled to Whippany, NJ.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate M. Teel Bivins to be Ambassador to Sweden.

#### ***December 2***

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to discuss peace efforts in the Middle East and the situation in Iraq. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Pittsburgh, PA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Mila Nguyen.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, the President informed Robert L. Bartley that he would receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

#### ***December 3***

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in an Oval Office ceremony, the President signed the 21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act. Later, he met with the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.

In the evening, on the State Floor, the President hosted a holiday reception.

The White House announced that the President will meet with King Abdullah II of Jordan at the White House on December 4.

The President announced his intention to nominate B. Francis Saul II and Ruth Sharp Altshuler to be members of the Library of Congress Trust Fund Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Arturo Duran as Commissioner of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico.

The President announced his intention to appoint Victor Rodriguez and Bray Bruce Barnes as members of the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

#### ***December 4***

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom to discuss the situation in Iraq and the NATO Alliance.

In the afternoon, in an Oval Office ceremony, the President received diplomatic credentials from Ambassadors Eva Nowotny of Austria, Feturi Elisaia of Samoa, Euripides L. Evriviades of Cyprus, Abdulaziz Kamilov of Uzbekistan, Said Tayeb Jawad of Afghanistan, Salvador Stadthagen of Nicaragua,